SWAMI JEWAN SAHIB

His Life and Ideals

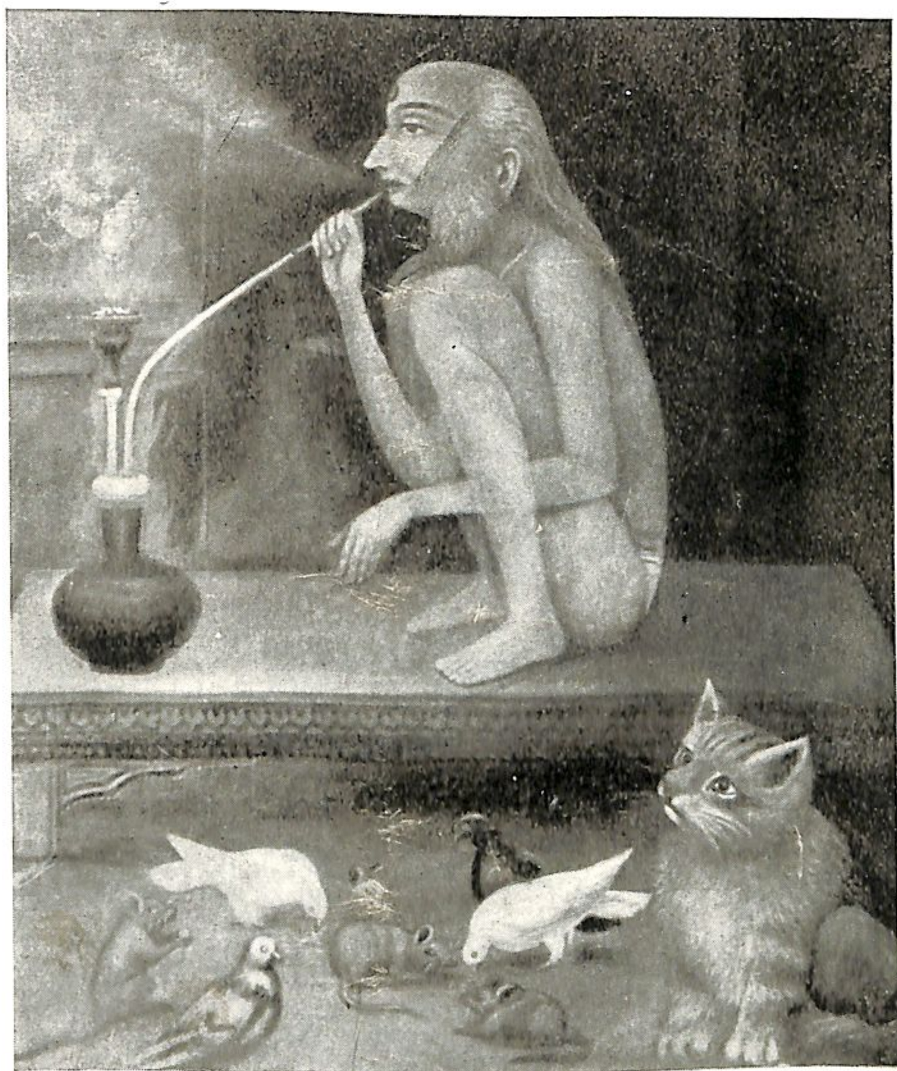
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Dedicated to Mother Kherbhawani

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Jewan Sahib, an embodiment of Peace and Harmony. (Ahinsa)

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JEWAN SAHIB

HIS LIFE & IDEALS

KASHMIR, the abode of sage Kashyapa has given birth to sages and seers, *munis* and *arhats* throughout its chequered history. The country has witnessed many vicissitudes of fortune—a few brilliant epochs but many lean centuries of economic, moral and spiritual gloom. During each time-cycle a developed and liberated soul did appear as an oasis for the helpless and careworn to whom the country was but a desert of despondency and disappointment, misery and sorrow. This seems to be the basis for the belief generally held in the county that God, Almighty sends forth great souls to redeem and salvage humanity when it is sinking fast into the abyss of degradation and misery. At various stages of the moral evolution of the *hameo sapiens* these developed minds have set humanity on the right track through their messages and gospels of Truth. Says Swami Vivekananda : " Those who give themselves up to the Lord do more for the world than all the so-called workers. One man who has purified himself thoroughly, accomplishes more than a regiment of preachers."

There is a close relation between the natural features of the country and the thirst for things spiritual which has marked out its people throughout the ages. The country is paradisial in its beauty of lakes and rivers and majestic mountains. The fragrant breeze blowing over hill and dale, the warbling of birds the gurgling of rills and the humming of bees on flower-spangled beds of green ever serve as a constant reminder of God's greatness. Thus it is no wonder if this land gave birth to such personalities as Lale-Shawri, Nund Rishi (Shiekh Nurdin), Mian Shah Sahib, Krishna Pandith Kar, Rishi Pir Sahib, Rupa Bahwani, Shri Zai-Kak (alias Zanana Zai), Jewan Sahib, to mention in chronological order a few mighty luminaries on the firmament of spirituality in Kashmir. Of these Shri Jewan Sahib was an orb of the first magnitude.

Early Life

Jewan Sahib was born and lived all his life in Motiyar, Rainawari (Srinagar) in the middle of the eighteenth century A. D. His simple, unostentatious yet intensely spiritual life, however, transcends in its boundless sweep all limitation of time and space. And there is a section of people who believe that he is still living, for his dead body when taken to the crematorium for the last rites is said to have mysteriously disappeared from the bier.

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Jewan was the fruit of prolonged devotion on the part of his parents. His father's name was Shree Raj Kak Pandit. He was a well-to-do man. He had no child. His mother who would visit the Shrine at Khirbahwani literally in sack cloth and ashes every month fell into a trance one day in which she beheld the Deity offering her two boughs, one of the pomegrenate tree and the other of the grape vine. She got sons one at the age of 50 and the other later on. As the Deity had said, one would be the son of the worldly parents and the other the son, as in fact he appeard to be, of the Deity herself. For, it is unimaginable that such a dazzling light could be born of common clay. Little could the parents know of his potential greatness, glimpses of which flashed forth from time to time. It is said that Jewan was only sixteen days old when he disappeared from the cradle and to the surprise and ineffable joy of all made his appearance again after a fort-night in the corner of a staircase. Jewan grew up to boyhood and was put to a local school, where he received his early education. He was very well-versed in Persian.

The indulgent parents married him when he was just a boy but the blessed son of the Goddess was not meant for worldly things. He was meant for the conquest of spiritual realms that are beyond the ken of average man. But the marriage took place much against his will--because the will of his parents was irresistible.

He renounced the world soon after the marriage and confined himself to a room for the whole of his life. He demanded a plank of wood (*takth*) on which he sat in the posture 'Kag-assan' (crow-posture), and for sixty years he remained absorbed in meditation. The plank (takth) stands a testimony to his holy and austere life and is cherished as a sacred relic to this day.

It is said Jewan was every now and then pursuaded by his mother, whom he very much respected and obeyed, that he should look after his wife who felt herself as if forsaken by her husband. He atonce yielded to his mother's wishes and asked her to get his wife to him. She was got before Swami Jee. He concentrated his full gaze on her for a few minutes and asked her (his wife) what else she desired. The young lady was atonce filled with ecstasy and effulgence and asked for a calm and secluded place for meditation and worship. She had no longer any desire for worldly objects and continued her meditations day and night like her husband.

Aversion to Extraordinary Powers

Swami Jee had an aversion to the display of extraordinary powers. He lived a quiet and unassuming life.

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A poet of the day composed a *qasida* in Persian in praise of Swami Jee fragments of which have come down to us, of course, in the traditional manner of father-to-the-son. The verse describes him to have always been in a silent trance. The burden of the song runs thus:

"Mast Jami murfat mastaná Jewan Sahib ást." (Drunk deep is Jewan Sahib with the wine of spirituality)

Swami Jee was not in favour of accepting gifts from people nor did he like to display extraordinary powers. People both Hindus and Mohamedans would come to him to have his *darshan*. He would instruct them through long discourses but the general tendency of the people is to remember the extraordinary stories connected with the saint and to conveniently forget his instructions and teachings. It would, therefore, be unfair to give prominence to the extraordinary side of Swami Jee, when he himself lived an unostentacious life. In fact, Swami Jee impressed upon his associates to live a very simple and harmonious life. He asked them not to be attached to woman and gold as will be mentioned in the following pages.

Sorry State of Affairs

But at times he was moved by the irresistable pleadings of those who were most inhumanly molested by the powerful and high-handed and he would come to their rescue in the most extraordinary manner. It will be interesting to give a brief account of the sorry state of affairs prevalent then in Kashmir under foreign rule for many years and the people were subjected to wanton cruelties. A foreign traveller named George Forster who visited the country in 1783 A. D. wrote in his book thus :

"Azad Khan, the present Governor of Kashmir, of the Afghan tribe, succeeded his father Hadji Kareem Dad a domestic officer of Ahmed Shah Duranny, and who was, at the death of that prince, advanced to the Government of Kashmire, by Timur Shah, as a reward for quelling the rebellion of Amir Khan, who has been already mentioned. Though the Kashmirians exclaim with bitterness at the administration of Hadji Kareem Dad, who was notorious for his wanton cruelties and insatiable avarice; often, for trivial offences, throwing the river, plundering their property, and forcing their women of every description; yet they say he was a systematical tyrant, and attained his purpose however atrocious, through a fixed medium. They hold a different language in speaking of the son, whom they denominate the Zaulim Khan, a Persian phrase which expresses a tyrant without discernment : and, if the smaller portion of the charges against him are true, the appellation is fitly besto-

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wed. At the age of eighteen years, he has few of the vices of youth; he is not addicted to the pleasures of the harem nor to wine, he does not even smoke the hookah. But his acts of ferocity exceed common belief they would seem to originate in the wildest caprice, and to display a temper rarely seen in the nature of men."

"That you may form some specific knowledge of the character of this, let me call him, infernal despot. I will mention some facts which were communicated during my residence in the province. While he was passing with his court, under one of the wooden bridges of the city on which a crowd of people had assembled to observe the procession, he levelled his musquet at an opening which he saw in the path way and being an expert marksman, he shot to death an unfortunate spectator. Soon after his accession to the government, he accused his mother of infidelity to her husband and in defiance of the glaring absurdity which appeared in the allegation as well as the anxious entreaties of the woman who had borne him to save her from shame, she was ignominously driven from the palace; and about the same time, on a like frivolous pretence, he put one of his wives to death. A film on one of his eyes had baffled the attempts of many operators, and being impatient at the want or success, he told the last surgeon who had been called in, that if the disorder was not remedied within a limited time allowing but a few days, his belly should be cut open; the man failed in the cure, and Azad Khan verified his threat."

His Kindly Grace

One will, therefore, realise how in these adverse circumstances, Swamiji was compelled at times to exhibt his kindly grace for the good of the suffering people. On one occasion one lady was returning home after her usual circumambulation of the Hari Parbath Shrine, when she was chased by some calous hooligans as was usual in those times and was carried into a boat. The people of the locality in utter desperation flew to Swami Jee for help. They invoked his mercy in tears. He was in a trance and uttered these words in Persian which sounded the death knell of the tyrants who intended to molest the lady:

" Agar Hukumi Khuda Naist Ba Kukumi Jeewan Sahib Kishti

Garakh Shawad wa Hindwa Bala Shawad." meaning (If it is not the will of Lord, let the boat sink and the lady come up by the command of Jewan Sahib). The boat after going a short distance is said to have mysteriouly overturned. The lady came up and the hooligans were drowned. In this connection one would very much like to quote the famous lines of Shree Utpal Dev who describes the unification of a real Bakhta with his Lord or the "Universal Consciouness" termed by seers:

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ईश्वरोहमहमेव रूपवान, पण्डितोस्मि सुभगोस्मि कोऽपरः
मत्समोस्ति जगतीति शोभते, मानिता त्वदनुरागिणः परम ॥

"I am the Lord, I am the beautiful, I am the learned, I am the loved one; who is above me? Because of me shines the Universe. This is the belief of thy devotees." Here Swami Jee, verily, unified himself with God and played His part.

The matter came to the notice of the Pathan Governor who ordered this *Kaffar* (Infidel-Swami Jee) to be brought to him in chains. But when his men came to do so a swarm of wasps bit some of his men to death and leopards made their appearance at the gate of Swami Jee. They ran for their lives and reported to the Governor that he was a real *Faqir* and not a *Kaffar* and that they would come to harm if they offended him. The Governor atonce set out in his royal chariot to pay hamage to this king of kings. It is said that the chariot came to a stand-still after going some distance and could not move forward. He realised that the *faqir* did not like him to come in that manner, and said: "Marzi Faqir Nest" (The faqir does not will so). Then he sent word to Swami Jee, requesting for an interview (darshan). The Swami Jee, agreed but on this condition that the Governor should come penniless to him and should not offer him jagirs etc., as *nazrana* (gift). The Governor came as directed and beheld Jewan Sahib in resplendent glory. He made his obeisance and acknowledged him as a *peer* in these words: "Bali Pir Hasti" meaning "Indeed, he is a Pir." Since then the family name of the descendants of Jeewan Sahib has come to be known as "Pir". It may be noted in this connection that there was no child of Jeewan Sahib by his wife as both of them lived an ascetic life. The descendents are from his brother Hara Sahib. who was the fruit of the pomegrenate branch offered by the deity.

Peace and Harmony

In Swami Jee's presence rats, cats and pigeons would always forlick and gambol together in friendly play. They would live in harmony forgetting their instinctive hostility to each other This is an instance of the power of love emanating from one who has become its embodiment This the distinctive mark of a truly non-violent soul. Shri Patanjili Jee in his "Yoga Darshan" says that in presence of a truly non-violent and truthful yogi even the ferocious animals change their violent nature. He writes:

अहिंसाप्रतिष्ठायां तत्सन्निधौ वैरत्यागः

It is said that once a person came with a pot of milk which he had to sprinkle over the image of the Deity-Vityal Bairav Jee which is in the neighbourhood. He first made an obeisance to Swami Jee and was about to leave when the

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latter told him to give this milk to these living creatures—rats, pigeons, cats to drink. He hesitated a while and said that he wanted to offer it to *Bairaw Jee*. Swami Jee told him that that it would mean the same thing if it was offered in his name to these creatures. Anyway, he told him to open the door of the room and offer it to the *Bairaw Jee* whom he would find there. The person opened the door and found to his surprise the Deity on horse-back with hands folded towards Swami Jee. The man was a good deal confused and craved the Swami's forgiveness and offered the whole milk to these rats, cats etc., to d r i n k. In this way d i d he demonstrate the superiotity of service to living creatures over mere ritualism. It is interesting to note here that Swamj Jee lived all his life on milk and never tasted rice or any other solid food.

As mentioned above he was very much moved by the abject misery of human beings and resorted very rarely to his extraordinary powers for their succour and relief. Once the rains failed and the drought resulting in a famine which was the usual lot of the country. People were panicky as there was acute shortage of food. They came to him for help and particularly the Muslim cowherds in the neighbourhood. Their cows were starving for want of food. He prayed to God in these words: "Ai Aka Naaran Chand Katra Baran Az Sabqi Bi Bar" (O! Great Lord, pray cause a shower of rain to fall from the old store). No sooner were these words uttered than the rain came in torrents. The parched fields began to smile with corn and people miraculously escaped a famine which would have taken toll of myriads of lives.

Dewan Dila Ram

With Swami Jee's blessing a pauper becomes a king. The pauper was Pt. Dila Ram Qali Khan who became the Dewan of Kashmir in the time of Azad Khan (A. D. 1783). A mention of this incident is also made by Pt Anand Kaul Bamzai in the "Kashmiri Pandit" Dila Ram was a very poor man. He had nothing to eat at home. He would go without food for days as he could not get it. The worst of it was that he was illiterate. He would always go to *Sahib* (popular name of Swami Jee) and serve him with devotion. One day Sahib told him, "Dila, you are hungry today, have some food. It is there in the corner." In those days the people of the locality used to offer the choicest dishes to Swami Jee on the occasions of marriage to invoke blessings for the married couple who would also be presented before him. The dishes would remain there for serveral days as the Swami lived on a meagre quantity of milk and nothing besides.

Dila Ram took the dish but the food was stale and he could not eat it. Swami Jee asked him to eat it with curds. Dila Ram could not still eat much of it. Swami Jee remarked

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that he was unfortunate and told him next to carry a pencase and go straight to the Old Dal Gate (*Pron Khun*). Dila Ram at first hesitated a good deal saying that he was quite illiterate and he could not carry a pen-case under his arm openly for he could not write anything if asked to. Swami Jee said, "Dilla, do you want to be the *Hakim* or the *Hakim's* brother-in-law (wife's brother) ?"Dila took it rather lightly wondering how an illiterate person like him could ever be a *Hakim* and more so his brother-in-law when he had no sister. Swami Jee told him to go straight to the spot and not to waste time. Dila Ram made for the place. He found that Azad Khan, the Governor had stopped his chariot there and the postman had delivered to him some letters which he was asking his Dewan Tarquili Khan, who was also his brother-in-law (wife's brother) to read out to him. Tarquli Khan was not quite literate and in the whole letter he could only read the words of "Sag Shavi" meaning "You sall be a dog". This line was a composition in verse setting forth the grievances of some persons. There was also a letter from his (Governor's) wife. Since Tarquli Khan could not read out, Azad Khan was looking for somebody else to do it. He sighted Dila Ram carrying a pencase under his arm and called him. Dila Ram (who was as illiterate as Tarquili Khan) read out the whole thing. The letter carried the happy news for the Governor that a son had been born to him. Next, there was the composition in verse which he read out fluently but the last line of the stanza he read as "Sag Shavam" meaning "I shall be a dog". The Governer detected the difference and told Dila Ram that it was "Sag Shavi" as easily read by Tarquli Khan and asked him why he read it differently. Dila Ram showed his wit by replying that since he was addressing the Governor it was not meet and proper for a man like him to utter such words of impudence and as such he addressed these words to himself even though they were addressed to the Governor. The Governor was very much pleased with Dila Ram and made him Dewan in place of Tarquli Khan whom, it is said, he beheaded forthwith. Now Dila Ram was in place of the person who had been both the Dewan and the Governer's brother-in-law. It was exactly what Swami Jee had wished him to be.

By the grace of Sahib, Dewan Dila Ram Kuli Khan came to possess mother wit and the power of ready repartee. One day Timur Shah Durani asked him what the caste-mark on his forehead signified. He atonce replied that the mark on the forehead resembling the figure one signified that God was one and the marks on the ear tips were witnesses to this fact. At this the Governor was immensely pleased.

To this, as Pandit Anand Koul tells us, he added two couplets in Persain :

"Bar Chahra am nazar kun peshanim bibin
Dagha Ghulami Shahi-Maulast bar jebin"

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"Gar Musalman kafir o kafir Musalman shud chi shud
Ancha bayad shud no shud gar in u garan shud chi shud".
"Look at my face and see my forehead
The mark of slavery of the Master King is on my forehead
If Musalman became a kafir or kafir a Musalman
If he did not become what he ought to (i. e. Pious, God-fearing etc.)
What matter it if he became this (kafir) or that (Musalman)"

Sahib's association had greatly shaped the personality of Dewan Dila Ram. He was god-fearing, honest and upright. As Dewan he discharged the duties of his office very honestly. He was kind and sympathetic towards people. He endeavoured his utmost to remove the sufferings of the people The presence of such elements in the country was the crying need of the day. This was a very dark period of Kashmir's history. It was through the efforts of Pandit Dila Ram that some of the heavy taxes levied on people were abolished. He was friendly to the foreign visitors. George Forster who visited Kashmir during his time writes very warmly of him:

"...... This person, of the Hindoo sect, possessed a more liberal disposition than is usually found in an Indian; though perhaps I am so much biassed by his indulgent treatment, that my opinion my be thought partial, but his deportment seemed uniformly benevolent to all classes of people; with his companions he was affable and good humoured, he was humane to his domestics, and he exercised with a reasonable temperance the duties of his office".

There was obviously a purpose in Sahib's blessings on Dila Ram and that was to make him serviceable to people who were then passing through very hard times. He got some taxes and levies abolished which improved the living condition of people.

In those days the position of *Dewans, Wazirs* and other officials was never secure and always depended on the whim of the ruler. One day the Governor got displeased with Dila Ram just over a trifle and ordered him to ford the river Attock where death was certain for him as the flow of the river was very rapid. Dila Ram went to his benefactor (Sahib) as usual and narrated the whole thing to him. He cheered him up saying that he should go and ford the river and come back. Dila Ram took heart and went next day to face the ordeal. While crossing the river, Dila Ram chanted a few verses of his own composition and thought of nothing but his *guru*.

The verses are in Kashmiri:

"Thari Posh wari Gai Drav Dewan,

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Motiyar Bod kus Jewan Mastan,
Attikhanzi Koli Yeli Taran Chus Tai,
Path tai Bront chus Nazra Diewan
Shearus Sahib Pada Gassan
Gari Gari Sahibo Soram Chon dyan".

The main idea of these verses is that the Dewan finding himself helpless tosses his head to and fro in the sea of pain (The Attock) but who should be there to rescue him...no one but *Sahib* whom he finds sailing by his side (as appeared to Dila Ram) stemming the ebb and flow of the tides and steering the boat of Dila Ram's life to the shore. To their utter surprise and dire disgust, the men of the Governor found Dila Ram on the other side of the river quite safe and sound. The news was carried to the Governor who on enquiry came to know that Dila Ram had the blessings of the Great *faqir* Jewan Sahib and he dared not touch him again.

As already mentioned above, Dila Ram had not been able to eat the whole of the dish which was stale and stinky, the remaining portion had been eaten by another *sevak* named Krishna Pandit. He became the head *Kotwal* (a high police official) through the potency of this sacred repast. One day he also fell a victim to the wrath of the Governor who ordered him to trace out a murderer within the prescribed period failing which, he would be put to death. Krishna Kotwal (popularly known by this name) went to Sahib and sat at his feet with his head hanging low. Sahib asked him why he looked so sad that day. Krishna Kotwal said, "Maharaj, this is the last *darshan* I am going to have now, as I shall be no more here from tomorrow". He narrated the whole story. Sahib comforted him by saying that everything would be all right. He was asked by Sahib to arrange a big show of the bards and the local musicians outside in the nearby garden. Krishna Kotwal complied. Instead of witnessing it himself, he sat before Sahib who told him, "Krishna, I have done what I had to do, you also get up and play your part". Krishna got up to witness the show outside. No sooner did he reach the spot than he found someone amongst the crowd of people arousing suspicion by trying to hide something under his arm-pit. Krishna Kottwal caught him and found the bloodstained dagger in his possession. He was the real culprit.. Krishna Kotwal took him to the Governor forthwith. The governor asked Krishna Kotwal how the murder was out. The latter told him that it was under Jewan Sahib's guidance that he had acted and found out the murderer. The Governor had already recognised the greatness of Sahib and readily came to have *darshan* in the company of Krishna Kotwal. It is said that the mar canal round Motiyar was constructed by Azad Khan, as he would off and on come to see Jewan Sahib sahib in his *paranda* (Royal boat).

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Three-fold Path.

The three-fold path prescribed by Sawmi Jee may be enunciated in his own words :

1. Zuth Na Walun. 2. Muth Na Khun. 3. Parastri Na Darun The first two items enjoin simplicity in food and clothing and the third lays down that one should not covet the neighbour's wife. These teachings lay emphasis on abstinance from "Woman and gold". There is nothing ascetic and rigorous about these rules of life as laid down by Sahib. They have a universal appeal and are bound to redeem humanity which is sinking into the depths of sin, degradation and misery. If a further expression of his message were needed, it could best be furnished by Swamis Jee's own holy life of perfect dedication.

It has, however, to be admitted that sometimes the turning point in ones life comes in the twinkling of an eye. It is said that in the time of Swami Jee there lived a woman after whom the locality where she lived is now called Buga Duji (near Kralyar, in Rainawari). The name of the woman was Bugri. She was given to a life of vice. In her old age she had paralysis and no one came near her. This isolation had a salutary effect on her. She recalled her past bad days and was humbled to dust. She was looking forward to have attained a state of beatitude and miraculously vanished out of human sight. Jewan Sahib as usual surrounded by his *seevaks* is said to have uttered unbidden in Kashmiri the words " Dayi Gari Lut-Bagi Wuth Wiman " meaning that "God's grace descends on whom it will. Even a sinful woman like Bagri soars in a chariot to heaven by the grace of God." He directed them to get up and see that Bagri was no more there; she had gone to heaven. They did go to the spot and found her gone. The locality since then is called Bag Daji which literally means " Bagi the changed woman."

Another Branch

From the same family tree there sprang another similar branch which gave its spirit-reviving shade to those who sought shelter under it. It was Swami Sudarshan Sahib well-known as Suda Sahib. He was born two generations after Jewan Sahib From his very childhood he dedicated himself to the life of the spirit. He lived with his father and mother, and shared their responsibilities as any wordly man would do but he kept his spiritual vision clear and unblurred. The words of William Wordsworth

" Type of the wise who soar but never roam,
True to the kindred points of heaven and home."

were true of Suda Sahib. He did not live an ascetic life to the extant done by Jewan Sahib. He would rise early in the

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morning and perform Sandya-Pranayama on the bathing gath for several hours everyday. It is said that one day a friend, Kawal Joo Ganhar, requested Suda Sahib to show him what he was. Suda Sahib put him off for a long time saying that he attained no such powers, and that he was quite an ordinary man like him. But the friend would never be convinced by his unassuming behaviour. He persisted in his friendy request. One day Suda Sahib was as usual at the bathing gath; Kawal Joo appeared and reminded him of his request. Suda Sahib bade him sit till he completed his Pranayama. When Suda Sahib got up, he stretched his body in the manner of relaxation. His head touched the heavens and Kawal Joo lost his consciousness, when he witnessed this awe-inspiring phenomenon. Suda Sahib resumed his form and bucked up Kawal Joo saying that he had seen nothing extraordinary yet.

During summer Suda Sahib would live in Mani Gam, a village several miles away from Tulamulla village (khirbhawani). In those days a renowned Sadhu named Labu Sahib resided in Tulamulla. They were acquainted with each other. Suda Sahib would blow the *Shunk* (conch-shell) while offering prayers so loudly that people in Tulamulla would hear it. It was the birthday of Labu Shah and some Sadhus including Soda Sahib were invited to dinner came and guests expecting Suda Sahib assembled. Labu Shah requested them to wait till Suda Sahib came as he was still offering his prayers, this being obvious from sound of the *Shunkh* he was blowing at the moment. The Shunkh stopped blowing and Suda Sahib appeared in the twinkling of an eye.

At this sudden appearance the guests were naturally astounded. They had dinner together.

In his old age Suda Sahib repaired to Haramukh Ganga accompanied by his servant. While returning from the place he reached the spot leading to Haramukh. Here he parted from his servant saying that he would go up to Haramukh never to return. The servant entreated him not to do so, for he said he was bound to accompany him back home. He did not agree and blew his Shunkh, which he carried with him, several times and made for Haramukh, and never returned The servant returned home and relatd the whole story to the house people and gave them the things he was asked to deliver. At this Swami Labu Shah of Tulamula is said to have remarked that it was not proper for Suda Sahib to leave the *ashram* of Jewan Sahib which was as holy as Haramukh. His salvation lay in looking after Jewan Sahib's *Takhat* (plank of wood on which he sat for the whole of his life). Swami Jewan Sahib commands great respect among the people and his several lovers and devotees are heard to repeat the following line as was chanted by his contemporary admirers :

"Sahib dari chi gam dari" meaning "What fear is there when Sahib is in your heart"

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